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ACTION ARA-01

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P 302205Z NOV 92
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5807
INFO ARA COLLECTIVE
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY MADRID

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 03 CARACAS 12533

E.O.12356: DECL: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, ASEC, MARR, PREL, VE
SUBJECT: DOMESTIC POLITICAL REACTION TO THE COUP ATTEMPT

REF: CARACAS 12499 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY. DOMESTIC POLITICAL REACTION TO THE COUP ATTEMPT LAUNCHED FRIDAY, 27 NOVEMBER, HAS FOLLOWED

PREDICTABLE LINES. ALL WHO HAVE SPOKEN OUT HAVE THOROUGHLY CONDEMNED THE COUP. BUT WHILE NO ONE IS SEEKING TO JUSTIFY THE VIOLENCE, THEY ARE ALSO NOT LETTING THE PRESIDENT OFF THE HOOK. THOSE, WHO BEFORE THE COUP ATTEMPT OPPOSED PRESIDENT PEREZ, STILL DO SO. THOSE WHO THOUGHT HE SHOULD GO, STILL THINK SO. THERE IS AGREEMENT THAT THE POLITICAL CRISIS -- GOVERNMENTAL CORRUPTION AND INEFFICIENCY -- WHICH SPAWNED THE COUP HAS NOT GONE AWAY. END SUMMARY.

ACCION DEMOCRATICA

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
DATE/CASE ID: 08 AUG 2006 200503206

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2. STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING PARTY, ACCION DEMOCRATICA, LARGELY ECHOED THOSE BY GOVERNMENT MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS. THE COUP LEADERS WERE DISMISSED AS MILITARY MALCONTENTS, LINKED TO THOSE WHO HAD ATTEMPTED THE 4 FEBRUARY COUP AND SUPPORTED BY CIVILIAN SUBVERSIVES LEFT-OVER FROM THE 1960'S. THE COUP WAS CHARACTERIZED AS AN ATTACK ON DEMOCRACY ITSELF; SPECIFICALLY, IT WAS NOT A COUP DIRECTED AT THE PRESIDENT. AS SUCH, THE PEOPLE WOULD REJECT THE COUP AND CHOOSE DEMOCRACY AS THE BEST MEANS TO RESOLVE THE CURRENT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS.

3. THUS, AD INSIDER AND PRESIDENTIAL-HOPEFUL CARMELO LAURIA: "ONCE MORE VENEZUELANS HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT THEY WANT TO PURSUE ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT BY MEANS OF DEMOCRACY AND PEACE. THE UTTER FAILURE OF THE SUBVERSIVES IS PROOF SUFFICIENT OF THIS." LAURIA ADDED, "THE CRUCIAL MOMENT HAS ARRIVED

FOR ALL VENEZUELANS TO UNITE IN A GREAT NATIONAL ACCORD CENTERED ON AN INTEGRAL REFORM OF THE STATE AND ITS FUNCTIONS TO FOCUS THEM EXCLUSIVELY ON THE PEOPLE."

4. CLAUDIO FERMIN, MAYOR OF CARACAS AND ANOTHER AD PRESIDENTIAL-HOPEFUL, SAID THAT HE "WOULD NEVER TIRE OF REPEATING THAT THE PROPER PATHS OF PROGRESS ARE PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING AND REASON." HE CALLED ON THE PRESIDENT TO FORGE A "NATIONAL UNDERSTANDING" AND WARNED THAT SUCH AN EFFORT MUST NOT BE LIMITED TO BEING A "SAFETY VALVE" BUT MUST CONSTITUTE A TRUE AND PERMANENT MECHANISM FOR PROGRESS.

THE OPPOSITION
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5. PREDICTABLY, OPPOSITION PARTY SPOKESMEN WERE LESS CHARITABLE TOWARDS PRESIDENT PEREZ, THOUGH MOST OF THOSE FROM THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN COPEI PARTY (THE MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY) WHO SPOKE OUT WERE PRIMARILY CONCERNED TO CONDEMN VIOLENCE AND SUPPORT REFORM BY MEANS OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. A STATEMENT TO THAT EFFECT BY EX-PRESIDENT RAFAEL CALDERA WAS FEATURED ON EARLY MORNING RADIO REPORTS FRIDAY: "I AM GREATLY

DISTURBED BY WHAT IS HAPPENING. I HOLD FIRM TO MY CONSTITUTIONAL BELIEFS AND I REPUDIATE VIOLENCE. WE MUST NEVER LOSE HOPE IN DEMOCRATIC AND INSITUTIONAL SOLUTIONS. SOLUTIONS WHICH USE VIOLENCE CAN ONLY CAUSE GRAVE DAMAGE TO THE ENTIRE NATION."

6. LUIS HERRERA CAMPINS, THE OTHER COPEI EX-PRESIDENT,

CALLED FOR A "GREAT NATIONAL DIALOGUE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS WHICH REPRESENT THE DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE NATION. I GREATLY REGRET THAT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 'CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL,' WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE 4 FEBRUARY COUP ATTEMPT, WERE NOT LISTENED TO BY PRESIDENT PEREZ."

7. COPEI SECRETARY GENERAL EDUARDO FERNANDEZ WAS ALSO ONE OF THE PROMINENT COPEI LEADERS WHO SPOKE OUT PUBLICLY ON FRIDAY TO CONDEMN THE REBELS. HE SAID THAT IT WAS NECESSARY FOR "ALL VENEZUELANS, IN THIS MOMENT, TO CONDEMN VIOLENCE IN THE MOST CATEGORICAL TERMS." HE PREDICTED THAT THE REJECTION OF THE COUP BY THE PEOPLE WOULD "DESTROY THE MYTH THAT SUBVERSIVE GROUPS ENJOY THE PEOPLE'S SUPPORT." ON SUNDAY, FERNANDEZ ADDED A

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 03 CARACAS 12533

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CALL FOR A DEBATE IN CONGRESS TO DETERMINE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE VARIOUS MILITARY COMMANDS AND OF THE PRESIDENT FOR NOT HAVING FORESEEN THE COUP. HE REJECTED THE PARTICIPATION OF COPEI MINISTERS IN A

"NATIONAL GOVERNMENT" BECAUSE, WHEN THEY HAD DONE SO AFTER 4 FEBRUARY, HE "HAD NOT WITNESSED AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT A COMMITMENT TO MAKING THE NECESSARY CHANGES."

8. MORE EXPLICITLY, MAS ("MOVIMIENTO AL SOCIALISMO") PARTY LEADER AND CARACAS MAYORAL CANDIDATE TEODORO PETKOFF LAID THE BLAME FOR THE REBELLION ON THE PRESIDENT, HIS GOVERNING PARTY, AND ON THE EDUARDO FERNANDEZ FACTION OF COPEI: "THIS IS ONE MORE DEMONSTRATION OF THE GRAVITY OF THE POLITICAL CRISIS. FOR MONTHS WE HAVE BEEN FLAGGING THE NEED TO PRODUCE A PEACEFUL AND DEMOCRATIC SOLUTION -- THAT IS, BY CUTTING SHORT THE PRESIDENTIAL MANDATE. I AM CONVINCED THAT THE PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF THE CRISIS IS PRESIDENT PEREZ AND HIS OBSTINATE REFUSAL TO ACCEPT A DEMOCRATIC SOLUTION. THERE IS IN THE COUNTRY WIDESPREAD REJECTION OF PEREZ' GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS DEPRIVED IT OF ALL

LEGITIMACY, AND WE OUGHT TO DO WHATEVER IS NECESSARY TO PERMIT THE PEOPLE TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINION ON WHETHER OR NOT THE PRESIDENT OUGHT TO STAY IN OFFICE." SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF THE PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, MAS PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL FREDDY MUNOZ CLAIMED THAT PEREZ (AS WELL AS BOTH ACCION DEMOCRATICA AND COPEI) SHARED A LARGE PART OF THE BLAME FOR THE CLIMATE WHICH MADE THE COUP ATTEMPT POSSIBLE: "THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE WANT DEMOCRACY, BUT NOT ONE RIDDLED WITH CORRUPTION AND WHERE THE VAST MAJORITY LIVE SO POORLY AND THE ENTIRE NATIONAL LIFE IS DOMINATED BY PARTISAN POLITICS AND OTHER EVILS WHICH HAVE DONE SO MUCH DAMAGE TO THE COUNTRY."

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9. CAUSA R GOVERNOR OF BOLIVAR STATE ANDRES VELASQUEZ AGREED THAT "THE PRINCIPAL DANGER TO THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM IS PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ HIMSELF WHO IS SO BLIND THAT HE DECLARED TO HIS SUPPORTERS THAT A 4 FEBRUARY COULD NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN." AS WELL AS CONDEMNING THE COUP LEADERS, VELASQUEZ CONDEMNED THE ENTIRE POLITICAL CLASS FOR REFUSING TO HEAR THE PUBLIC CLAMOR DEMANDING REFORM.

10. AN EVEN HARSHER JUDGEMENT WAS DELIVERED BY THE 87-YEAR OLD SCHOLAR, WRITER, AND "NOTABLE" ARTURO USLAR PIETRI (OVER THE LAST YEAR, MOST PUBLIC OPINION POLLS SHOW HIM RUNNING SECOND OR THIRD IN THE PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCES): "I AM CONVINCED THAT THE IMMENSE MAJORITY OF VENEZUELANS DO NOT WANT A GOVERNMENT BY FORCE, BUT NEITHER DO THEY WANT THIS FARCE OF A CORRUPT AND INEPT DEMOCRACY." HE ARGUED THAT "ANYONE WHO THINKS THIS IS JUST A PROBLEM WITH THE MILITARY SIMPLY DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION. RATHER, THE INSURRECTION REFLECTS A GENERAL OUTCRY, A DENUNCIATION OF OFFICIAL INCOMPETENCY, OF CORRUPTION AND THE LACK OF PROGRESS, OF THE INABILITY OF THE PRESENT DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM TO ACCOMPLISH ITS GOALS. ONCE BEFORE, IN 1990, THERE WAS A 'NATIONAL PACT' AGREED, COMPLETE WITH PRESIDENT PEREZ' SIGNATURE, TO REFORM THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM, THE JUDICIARY, THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND TO COMBAT CORRUPTION. SOON, IT WAS A DEAD LETTER. (COMMENT: TRUE.) THEN, THE EVENTS OF 4 FEBRUARY TOOK PLACE, AND IN RESPONSE A 'CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL' WAS ESTABLISHED WHICH RE-ENDORSED THESE ESSENTIAL REFORMS.

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THE RESULT, ONCE AGAIN A DEAD LETTER." (NOTE: A PERUVIAN PRESS REPORT HAS TWO OF THE MILITARY OFFICERS WHO SUCCESSFULLY FLED TO PERU CITING USLAR PIETRI AS ONE OF THE "IDEOLOGICAL MENTORS" OF THE UPRISING.)

11. WELL-KNOWN LEFTIST JOURNALIST AND MUCKRAKER JOSE VICENTE RANGEL ALSO DENOUNCED BOTH THE COUP AND PRESIDENT PEREZ: "WE VENEZUELANS WANT CHANGE BUT NOT VIOLENCE. IF A MAJORITY OF THE VENEZUELANS ARE DEMANDING THE DEPARTURE OF CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ FROM THE PRESIDENCY, THIS OUGHT NOT TO BE IDENTIFIED WITH SUPPORT FOR A COUP. BUT CONDEMNATION OF VIOLENCE DOESN'T SUFFICE. WE CONDEMNED THE EVENTS OF 27 FEBRUARY 1989 AND WE PROMISED REFORMS. WE CONDEMNED THE EVENTS OF 4 FEBRUARY 1992 AND WE PROMISED REFORMS. IS THE SAME THING GOING TO HAPPEN WITH THE EVENTS OF 27 NOVEMBER? EACH TIME SOMETHING HAPPENS, WE APPLAUD THE MATURITY AND SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY OF THE VENEZUELAN

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 03 OF 03 CARACAS 12533

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PEOPLE. BUT WHEN IS THIS RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR GOING TO BE RECIPROCATED BY THE POLITICAL LEADERS?"

12. COPEI CONGRESSIONAL LEADER PACIANO PADRON PUBLICLY

ARGUED, ON NOVEMBER 29, THAT THE BRINGING-TO-JUSTICE OF THE PRESIDENT (IN THE CASE OF THE ALLEGEDLY MISAPPROPRIATED 250 MILLION BOLIVARS -- SEE, CARACAS 12155) WAS AS IMPORTANT AS DEALING WITH THE COUP LEADERS.

COMMENT
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13. PUBLIC OPINION, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF LOYAL ADECOS, TRACKED GENERALLY WITH THAT EXPRESSED EDITORIALLY (REPORTED SEPTELS): THE EVENTS OF 27 NOVEMBER DEMONSTRATE, YET AGAIN, THAT THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE REJECT VIOLENCE AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE, BUT THE NEW COUP ATTEMPT ALSO DEMONSTRATES THAT THE POLITICAL CRISIS CONTINUES. SKOL